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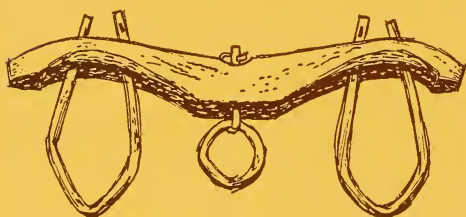
Callender, James P.

Abraham Lincoln, the inspired
of God

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Inspired of God

By

JAMES P. CALLENDER

Delivered February 12, 1928

Christian Endeavor Society

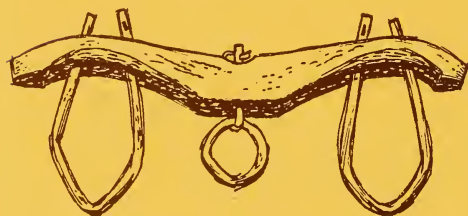
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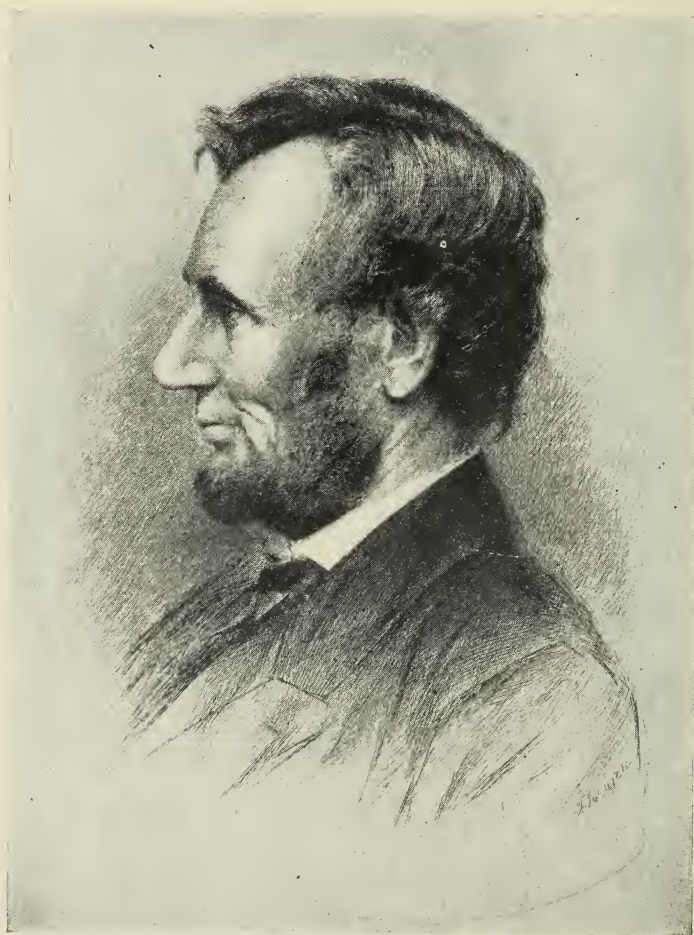
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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Inspired of God

By JAMES P. CALLENDER

IT IS well for us in this age, when there seems to be such a growing tendency on the part of some of our writers and instructors to belittle our great men, and who seek to find and magnify their seeming imperfections and have it appear that the reason for their high position is more or less an accident, for us to carefully study some of the things about them that make them the great and powerful influences that they really are.

President Coolidge has said :

“It is only when men begin to worship that they begin to grow. A wholesome regard for the memory of the great men of long ago is the best assurance to a people of a continuation of great men to come, who shall still be able to instruct, to lead and to inspire, a people who worship at the shrine of greatness, will themselves be truly great.”

Let us then, for the destiny of our beloved country, depends on this growing generation, who in a few brief years will hold the reins of power and on whose shoulders will rest the responsibility and in whose hands will be placed the destiny of America, consider with due reverence Abraham Lincoln as inspired by God. This is a most fitting place to consider this angle of his character; a former minister of this Church, the

Rev. Howard Crosby, whose likeness in a memorial window adorns this edifice, said:

“I look upon Abraham Lincoln as a special instrument of God to meet a fearful crisis in our country’s history.”

Lincoln, himself, believed, in God’s inspiration, for he said to Dr. Robert Browne:

“I am a full believer that God knows what he wants a man to do. I talk to God. * * * I catch the fire of it, the spirit of inspiration I see reflected in the open faces and throbbing hearts before me. This impulse comes and goes and again returns and seems to take possession of me. The influence, whatever it is, has taken effect. It is contagious. The people fall into the stream and follow me in the inspirations, or what is beyond my understanding. This seems evidence to me, a weak man, that God himself is leading the way.

At Newark he said:

“I am sure, however, that I have not the ability to do anything unaided by God.”

At his farewell at Springfield:

“I now leave, not knowing when or whether ever I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested up on Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him, who can go with me and remain with you and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well, to His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.”

What are the evidences we have of Divine inspiration. What of Moses? What of Paul? Moses, attracted no particular attention as a young man, luxuriating about the court of Pharaoh. He was no different from the rest until he stood before the burning bush. Here he faced God. Paul, the utterer of threats against Christ's disciples, embittered in his heart, he trudged the road to Damascus, when Lo, a great light appeared and the voice of God, saying:

"Paul, why persecutest thou me?"

This vision made Paul a new man and he became the greatest preacher of all time.

After the Divine spark, these men reached the heights where they illuminate all the ages.

Two strange occurrences mark the early life of Lincoln. As a lad, on his first trip down the Mississippi at New Orleans, he first saw a slave market, where his nature, so tender that he later cast himself on Ann Rudlidge's grave, sobbing out that he could not bear the thought of the rain falling on it, was so shocked at the buying and selling of men and women, that he raised his hand and said:

"If ever I get a chance to hit that thing, I will hit it hard."

Rather a high-sounding declaration from a ragged and unknown lad. Yet, God permitted that these very words should be fulfilled by him.

Later, and as early as 1837, he attended a meeting, where Dr. Peter Akers, in discussing those questions which ultimately resulted in the Civil War and predicted its coming, said: "Who can tell but that the man who shall lead us through this strife may be standing in this presence?" And Lincoln, the boy of

23, said to his friends: "Gentlemen you may be surprised and think it strange, but when the preacher was describing the Civil War I distinctly saw myself, as in second sight, bearing an important part in that strife." Next day his law partner, Herndon, found him thoughtful, careworn and haggard and asked him what was the matter, to which Lincoln recited what had occurred the day before, and said:

"I am utterly unable to shake myself free from the conviction that I shall be involved in that terrible war."

Those words he heard seemed to be meant for him and no one else. Was God then preparing him for his task?

Lincoln became President at a time when the Civil War had in reality started. In February before his inauguration, the senators and congressmen from the South had resigned their seats. The first Confederate Congress had been formed, secession was an actuality.

This was the most perilous and critical period in our national history and no one but a master could cope with it.

To him the question of secession was abhorrent.. To him it was the paramount question. In his first inaugural, he said:

"You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it."

The freeing of slaves did not come until 1863, at which time he said to his Cabinet: "I made a covenant with God that if the Battle of Antietam resulted in victory I would then launch the Emancipation Proclamation," and in 1862 he wrote to Greeley:

"If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the

slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

His attitude toward the south was with malice toward none, with charity to all. He was ever ready to restore the Union on terms of equality.

The God-like virtue of forgiveness was with him an outstanding quality.

When Lee's sons were captured, at a time when the threat was made at Richmond to hang certain Union officers held captive and Stanton was clamoring in that event for the execution of Lee's sons, without awaiting the event, Lincoln said:

"I cannot help it if a crime be committed in Richmond," but he took down his Bible and read to Stanton: "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." Turning his back he sent this telegram:

"Release the sons of Robert E. Lee and restore them to their father."

His constant exercise of the pardoning power drove Stanton to fury. This did not concern Lincoln. After a hard day he was relieved by restoring some poor boy to his family.

Rested he was, closer to God he became, after signing the paper which restored to life he who but for that must have died. What if his generals swore. What did they know of the God-given rest to a troubled soul, which following such an act?

If ever man smitten on one cheek turned the other; if ever man forgave, it was Lincoln.

To whom Seward wrote in effect that the Government had no policy and suggested that he, Seward, assume the helm of state, and to whom Lincoln, without malice on the same day,

wrote his great reply, which forever showed Seward who the master was.

It was Lincoln, who had been selected with Stanton to try an important case and who Stanton had scornfully pushed aside and forced out from his part in the litigation, who was rewarded by a cabinet post and who wrote Buchanan contemptuous letters regarding Lincoln and his ability, but who in the next few years became the supporter and worshipper of Lincoln, on whose death Stanton said he now belongs to the ages, and who described him as the greatest ruler mankind had ever had.

It was the Lincoln to whom Chase was forever tendering his resignation and who openly and actively plotted to succeed Lincoln as his party nominee in 1864, who Lincoln rewarded with the Chief Justiceship of the United States.

It was the Lincoln, who when General Hooker said that what the country needed was a military and civil dictator, had the magnanimity in placing Hooker in command of the Army of the Potomac to write General Hooker: "Only those generals who gain success can set up dictatorship. What I now ask of you is a military success and I will risk the dictatorship.

"He whom God loveth, he chasteneth."

In those dark days of the Civil War he stood alone with God. At times it seemed as though God had even turned away his face. His generals were losing battles. His generals were failing to obey and disregarding his dispatches and orders, failing to follow up even their victories as he directed they should. Members of his cabinet at the commencement were his open critics.

Defied by the Governor of New York, a large part of the north opposing from time to time his policies. Greeley, the rabid abolitionist ready for peace and disunion; McClelland contesting for the presidency; Valandingham conspired against him, his own household being suspected of furnishing infor-

mation to the enemy ; spending one of his nights partly at a ball given to keep up the spirits of the north, and partly at the bedside of his dying child, surely he trod his winepress alone ; his gentle kindly face was deeply furrowed with the lines of care, yes he was "a man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief," what wonder is it that Frank Carpenter, his portrait painter, said of him.

"His was the saddest face I have ever known. There were times I could not look at him without shedding tears."

For him God indeed had a purpose.

Lincoln one day took down his Bible and read to Father Chiniquy :

"And I besought the Lord at that time, saying . . . I pray thee, let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes and would not hear me ; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee ; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes ; for thou shalt not go over this Jordan."

After the President had read these words, with great solemnity, he added :

"My dear Father Chiniquy, let me tell you that I have read these strange and beautiful phrases several times these last five or six weeks. The more I read them the more it seems to me that God has written them for me as well as for Moses. Has he not taken me from my poor log cabin by the hand, as he did Moses in the reeds of the Nile, put me at the head of the greatest and most blessed of modern nations, just as he put that prophet at the head of the most blessed nation of ancient times ? Has not

God granted me the privilege, which was not granted to any living man, when I broke the fetters of 4,000,000 of men and made them free? Has not our God given me the most glorious victories over our enemies? Are not the armies of the Confederacy so reduced to a handful of men when compared to what they were two years ago, that the day is fast approaching when they will have to surrender?

“Now I see the end of this terrible conflict with the same joy as Moses, when, at the end of his forty years in the wilderness; and I pray my God to grant me to see the days of peace and untold prosperity, which will follow this cruel war, as Moses asked God to let him see the other side of Jordan and enter the promised land. But, do you know, I hear in my soul the voice of God giving me the rebuke which was given Moses? Yes; every time that my soul goes to God to ask the favor of seeing the other side of Jordan, and the fruits of that peace, for which I am longing with such an unspeakable desire, do you know that there is a still but solemn voice which tells me that I will be among the dead when the Nation, which God granted me to lead through those awful trials, will cross the Jordan, and dwell in that land of promise, where peace, industry, happiness and liberty will make everyone happy, and why so? Because He has already given me favors which He never gave, I dare say, to any man in these latter days.

“Why did God Almighty refuse to Moses the favor of crossing the Jordan and entering the promised land? It was on account of his own nation’s sins. That law of divine retribution and justice, by which one must suffer for another, is surely a terrible mystery. But it is a fact which no man who has any intelligence and knowledge

can deny. Moses, who knew the law, though he probably did not understand it better than we do, calmly says to his people, 'God was wroth with me for your sakes.' But though we do not understand that mysterious and terrible law, we find it written in letters of tears and blood wherever we go. We do not read a single page of history without finding undeniable traces of its existence . . .

"When I look on Moses, alone, silently dying on Mount Pisgah, I see that law in one of the most sublime human manifestations, and I am filled with admiration and awe . . . My God alone knows what I have already suffered for my dear country's sake. But my fear is that the justice of God is not yet paid. When I look upon the rivers of tears and blood drawn by the lashes of the merciless masters from the veins of the very heart of those millions of defenseless slaves these 200 years; when I remember the agonies, the cries, the unspeakable tortures of those unfortunate people to which I have, to some extent, connived with so many others, a part of my life. I fear that we are still far from the complete expiation. For the judgments of God are true and righteous.

"It seems to me that the Lord wants today, as he wanted in the day of Moses, another victim—a victim He has Himself chosen, anointed, and prepared for the sacrifice by raising it above the rest of His people. I cannot conceal from you that my impression is that I am that victim. * * *

Preceding great events, Lincoln dreamt a dream, it was always the same, he seemed to be on the water in some singular indescribable vessel moving with great rapidity towards an indefinite shore. He had this dream preceding Sumpter, Bull Run, Antietam, Gettysburg, Stone River, Vicksburg.

"I had that dream last night," he told Grant and Gideon Wells

on April 14th, 1865. Within a few hours he had crossed that indefinite shore, he had become immortal.

How can we account for these evidences. How can we account for his mastery of prose.

His second inaugural is a master's piece of inspired writing. He felt that the war was God's punishment to man for continuing slavery, not to the South alone but to the North. To him the whole Government had been a party to it in condoning its existence. The punishment, like the rain, must fall equally on the just and unjust. He shows his great feeling of mercy and purpose to end the thing in justice and unity, when he then said :

“The Almighty has his own purpose. Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.” If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses, which in the Providence of God must needs come, but which having continued through his appointed time, he now wills to remove, and that he gives to both the North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense comes, shall we disarm therein any departure from those divine attributes which he believes in a living God, always ascribable to him. Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said 3,000 years ago, so still it must be said ‘The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’

“With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let

us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

His Gettysburg address is the most perfect example of prose in the English language and hangs, as such, on the walls of Oxford University, the College of Gladstone, who was born in the same year as was Lincoln. This short address was delivered after Everett's two hour effort; the accomplished and world famous scholar Everett, the polished orator of the day, beside whom Lincoln thought what he himself might say would be of no moment; we all know what Lincoln said then, but who of us has ever read a word of Everett's speech?

How then did this man, born in poverty, raised in want, helping at the age of nine to fashion the coffin for his dead mother, accustomed to hardship and trial, with no schooling, as we know it, surpass in heart and mind, in intellectual attainment, in ability to handle men, in the attributes of God-like forgiveness, mercy, and in foresight, all men of his time, all those who had the wealth, the power, the education and the opportunity which he so sadly lacked, except he was the chosen of God? His period in our history is past.

"Great captains with their guns and drums
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But at last silence comes;
These all are gone and standing like a tower
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly, earnest, brave foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American."

Our country has since been reconsolidated by two wars on

whose battlefields have flowed the blood of our sons from every corner of this republic.

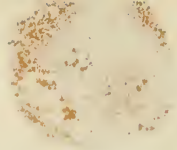
Fifty years after, the Gettysburg Battle was re-enacted. The old men in Blue and Gray. The rebel yell once more burst from the thin old gray ranks as Pickett's men charged the ridge with flags and swords and guns. Behind the wall with bayonet fixed were those old men in Blue, who arose to meet the friend, no clash of steel was heard, but with arms entwined, with tears wetting those brave old cheeks, they exchanged their coats and hats and recited it all over again in loving friendship.

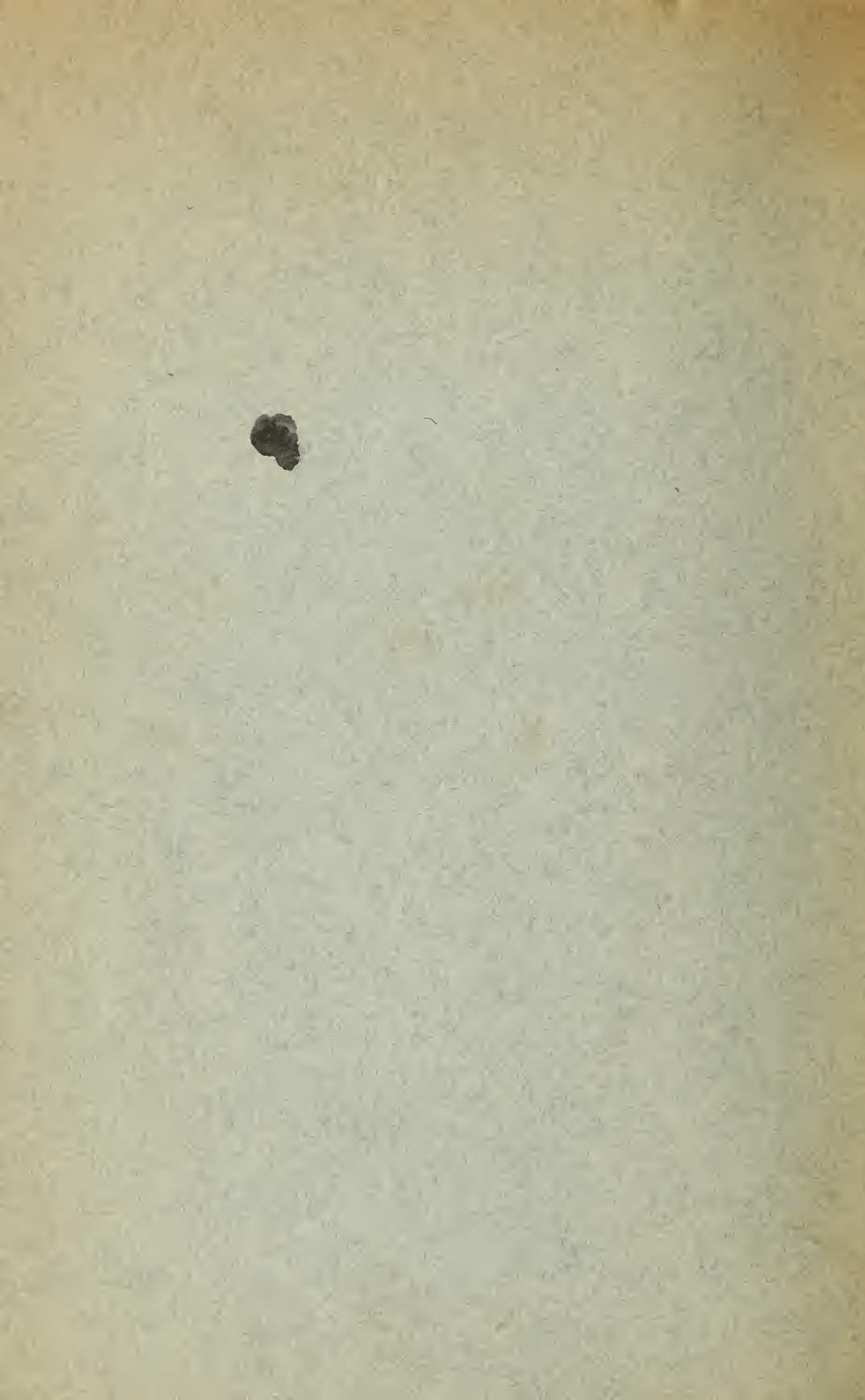
Where but in our beloved country could such a scene take place, but Lincoln knew it all. In his first inaugural he said like what now seems a benediction :

"I am loath to close. We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory stretching from every battlefield and patriot's grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched as surely they will be by the better angles of our nation."

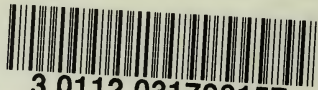
To no state, to no section belong Lincoln or Lee or Grant or Stonewall Jackson or Washington or Pershing, our heroes glorious and immortal, and every battlefield and every pioneer skirmish from the founding of this country throughout its history, belong to us all; they are yours; they are mine in ownership and possession; they are our common heritage, we are the trustees and the guardians of this heritage. Let us study the glorious lives of our great men, catch the fire of their inspirations and rededicate ourselves to patriotism for our beloved country, that this republic may forever stand for the freedom, the liberty and the instrumentality of great moral purpose for all mankind.







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